

The Sociology of European Integration

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A PROBLEMATIC ABSENCE characterises sociology's relationship with EU studies. Although potentially one of the disciplines that might bring a much needed 'bottom up' view of the origins and sources of European integration – along with social history, anthropology, social psychology, human geography – its contributions have been scattered and marginal. Dominant understandings of European integration remain wedded to the resolutely 'top down' view of IR theory, law, diplomatic history. Sociological claims and argumentation were very much at the heart of the classic studies of Haas (1958) on elite socialisation to the European project, or Deutsch (1957) on increased interaction between nationals of the continent, as the two surest routes to regional integration. Yet today sociologists barely feature among the participants at mainstream EU conferences. You can usually count the number of practicing sociology faculty at EUSA on one hand – although we are delighted to note that Neil Fligstein has joined the executive committee! – and, on a good day, as Neil Fligstein could testify, you might need two to count the number of sociologists at the American Sociological Association conference who have any interest in European integration. While sociological sounding questions can be found everywhere in EU studies, yet sociologists apparently are not at the party.

In recent critical literature reviews we have attempted to round up and summarise the existing 'sociological' style literature, as well as point to new and ongoing work that seems to advance a new agenda for sociology in EU studies (Favell 2006; Guiraudon 2006; also circulated). The focus there was on re-stating a case for an empirical political sociology of the EU – influenced in large part by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, and

most widely developed by French scholars – that homes in on the social backgrounds, careers, and organisational strategies of recognisable EU actors operating in the “political field” of Brussels (see Guiraudon 2001; Favell 1998). Partly, this is a reworking of familiar objects and events of study into a different conceptual language. Partly too, we admit, our agenda is also a “turf war” kind of exercise: driven by a certain frustration with the way other disciplines have moved in to “sociological” terrain – notably the social constructivists in IR – without necessarily being driven by core sociological questions, or indeed using recognisably empirical sociological strategies. Another big frustration is the regretful identification of sociology with debates in social theory – Habermas, Giddens, Beck and others (the best of this kind of work in EU studies is represented by the recent textbook by Delanty and Rumford 2005) – or with normative approaches to (again, the best of which might be work associated with ARENA in Oslo, i.e. Eriksen 2005 or Bellamy/Castiglione 2006). These approaches are established and evolving in their own ways, but are not necessarily aiding the development of an empirical sociology of European integration.

Here, we go beyond the critical reviews, to offer another, different grounding for sociology in EU studies. First, we turn the question around. Instead of critiquing would-be sociological approaches out there, we rather ask why sociology as a discipline – whose central object of study is “society” – finds it so difficult to study the EU. The answer lies in the great difficulties it has transcending the theoretical and methodological problem of “methodological nationalism”, especially when it comes to a collective social entity such as the EU that is neither a nation, a state or a society. Second, we will consider the

question of how to operationalise what should be the core question of any theory of European integration: that is, the question of what are the “social bases of European integration”, a question that would restore the biggest sociological question of all to the mainstream EU studies agenda.

The curse of methodological nationalism: a quick snapshot of contemporary sociology (with a capital ‘S’)

Why have nominal sociologists (as opposed, say, to political scientists or lawyers with a sociological sensibility) failed to study European integration? There is, to be fair, a huge Transatlantic divide on this point, which we will elaborate on.

Sociology in Europe is Europeanised enough; that is not the problem. European sociologists have their own European journals and associations (such as *Innovation, European Societies*, ESA, ECSR); they work on the same European commission funded projects that keep us all busy. But it is fair to say that little of this work connects up with the mainstream of EU studies, as represented for example at EUSA. One issue is that sociology in Europe is not dominated by empiricists, but by social theorists. Such is the influence and expansion in European sociology (especially in Britain) of inter-disciplinary, humanities inspired theorising in discourse and text-based media, gender, communications and cultural studies, that empiricism as such is seen as a bad thing. The biggest name theorists – Giddens, Bauman, Beck and Urry – thus preach for a cosmopolitan or global sociology ‘beyond societies’ or ‘methodological nationalism’

(which is indeed the correct problematic to point to), but none have shown any interest in studying Europe or the EU in a contextualised, comparative or empirically specified way. Empiricism as such is a bad word for many social theorists. The baby of empirical methodology was thrown out with the bathwater of positivism. So there is work inspired by Habermas and Foucault that focuses on Europe *and* has some relationship with mainstream EU studies (worthy of note are, respectively, the work of Trenz/Eder 2005; and Bigo 1996) , but most work in these paradigms is shot through with the normative baggage and anti-positivist stance of critical theory. The Bourdieusian agenda in French political sociology of the EU is the big exception, as we document elsewhere in our review articles. Bourdieu – unlike archetypal ‘grand theorists’ like Habermas or Giddens – was above all an empirical sociologist. While critical of naïve positivism, he was also hostile to theory for theory’s sake, endorsing rather a kind of post-post positivist position on epistemology (see especially the manifesto laid out in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) It is a shame that French political science influenced by Bourdieu is not a better known literature in mainstream anglo-american EU studies. This French literature could be a model for a revived political sociology of the EU, in the midst of a mainstream political science of the EU, that has with anglo-american political science everywhere, removed political sociology from its agenda. Yet, excepting this Bourdieusian sociology, it is quite remarkable how little all the grand talk of contemporary social theory – about transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, mobilities, hybridity, identities, public spheres, governmentality, risk society, modernity, postmodernity, reflexive modernization, or whatever – has to offer to studying contemporary European or the EU in empirical terms

that have anything in common with how mainstream EU studies scholars approach the field.

In North America, the problems are completely different. Social theory in American sociology is practically dead and buried; sociology is a resolutely empiricist and, hegemonically speaking, quantitative discipline. That's not the problem necessarily, but try attending the ASA as a 'Europeanist'. The vast majority of American sociologists still study the US *as if* it were the sociology of the modern world, studying processes (of stratification, labor conflicts, education, immigrant assimilation, race relations, culture etc) exclusively *within* this one society. Recent ASA conferences stressing the policy relevance of American sociological research – as in the good old days of the 60s and Lyndon B. Johnson's "great society" – sees the discipline chasing after a narrow national relevance which only makes it all the more provincial. Within this, the notion of a "global sociology" is as marginal as can be, and comparativists and regional specialists have to take refuge in interdisciplinary area studies, which rise and fall according to State Dept security priorities. So funding for Middle Eastern, Euroasian and Chinese studies is hot right now in the US, while Europe, especially Western Europe, is nowhere. We should in short not hold our breath waiting for American sociology to have much to say about Europe.

There are noble exceptions of course, but remarkably few sociologists in North America – even those with European interests – know or care much about the EU. European sociologists, meanwhile, seem to working in a parallel universe. This leads to a further

problem. Sociology, when it is thoroughly empirical, is bound to a kind of ‘methodological nationalism’ it finds almost technically impossible to transcend (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). For example, RC28, the international gathering of social stratification scholars, certainly does pursue comparative work on western industrial societies, but they rely exclusively on data that identifies and counts class distinctions, occupations or social mobility on a strictly society-by-society basis, so that the variation they study is always cross-national. Whether it is UN, OECD, national or international government data that is used, it is very difficult to systematically study pan- or trans- national social structures and phenomena because of the way nation-states have carved up the world and its populations, statistically speaking. In fact, it is a historical artefact of the modern world: the statistical technology of states is itself a vital constitutive part of the modern nation-state system. Even at the heart of the EU’s statistical system – Eurostat, Eurobarometer – the mindset of methodological nationalism is reproduced, so that researchers are always more focused on how and why France differs on Europe from Britain or the Netherlands, but rarely on the social classes, networks, identities or attitudes that might cut across these national divides. It is national variation that keep European politicians awake at night in anticipation of the next political rejection, but this obsession with document national differences within Europe in fact prevents lateral thinking about the structures of European economy and society.

Another case in point are the welfare states/varieties of capitalism scholars, many of whom are sociologists (or political sociologists), and constitute one of the largest battalion of Europeanists in the US and Europe. In case you don’t know who these are

folks are, roughly speaking they are the crowd that packs out the Council for European Studies, the sister conference of this one, that happens on alternate years. The themes and agendas of these two conferences have, in recent years, drifted apart. A good example is the debate centered on Esping-Andersen's *Social Foundations of Post-Industrial Society*, one of the single most important recent works on the future of the European welfare state, and a virtual bible of progressive thinkers and policy makers in terms of the post-Lisbon 'flexicurity' agenda. Esping-Andersen's certainly brilliant work is however locked in the methodological nationalist mode: it is a Europe of varieties, indeed 'worlds', of welfare capitalism, in which the European Union, or European regional integration processes are barely even mentioned. How quaint you might think— although it is a standard practice among the majority of American Europeanists studying Europe, and a feature of the work of the most prominent Europeans involved in these circles. Yet Esping-Andersen's fame is deserved. The book tackles the complex interlocking relationship between the historical shift from manufacturing to service economies, social and employment legislation, economic growth and unemployment, child birth rates and child care, and the crisis of demography and ageing in European societies, offering an intellectual grounding for the Scandinavian 'flexicurity' agenda as a solution; it is, in short, a book about the future of Europe in the most fundamental structural sense. So we might laugh and say how can a book about the future of Europe fail to mention the EU? Well, yes – although, in fact, the achilles heel of Esping Andersen is not this, but its failure to discuss low end immigration as a now permanent structural feature of European economy and society. But the point can be turned around. How can any study that claims to offer a so-called 'theory of European integration' – the body of work we are discussing today – fail to

discuss the structural future of the European model(s) of economy and society, as reflected in the varieties of capitalism/welfare states debates? The European Commission certainly is thinking about these things. The Lisbon agenda, of course, is all about this; and influential reflections such as the Sapir report are, like Esping-Andersen, centred on squaring these very circles. But can we fairly claim that the dominant or challenging ‘theories of European integration’, that keep legions of EU studies scholars busy, are really engaging with this agenda—what is, on reflection, *the* fundamental theoretical issue in Europe today.

Well, ‘Why should we care?’, you might say. As we know, as laid out in overviews such as Ben Rosamond’s (2000), debates between inter-governmentalists, neo-functionalists, realists and constructivists have consumed acres of forest and hours of conference time. But it should surely give us pause for thought that, for example, though Andrew Moravcsik’s canonical *The Choice for Europe* (1998) might, in a five minute trawl on Google Scholar, be established as the single most cited book in EU studies (at around 700 cites—we are willing to check for other suggestions), it is *half* as widely cited as *The Social Foundations* (a 2000 publication), and *six* times less than Esping-Anderson’s earlier *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. For sure, silly numbers games like this tell us nothing about the ‘objective’ intellectual importance of any of this work. But it should remind us of something: even at its most sublimely self-referential (scholars who gather at EUSA are nothing if not highly self-referential, and Google Scholar above all measures self-referentiality), EU studies always risks being an intellectual ghetto – and it doesn’t *even* have a monopoly on studying Europe! This point has been made often by scholars

working in the North American academic context and EUSA board members (see Caporaso 1998) where arguments about the EU's *sui generis* character and methodology of n=1 is not likely to get you a job or help you communicate with your colleagues (see Verdun 2003 for an incisive discussion of the “American” versus “European” approaches to integration theory). It is also a point by UK EU scholar Simon Bulmer who put it this way: “ the lack of interdisciplinary dialogue have risked confining European integration to an intellectual 'ghetto' within the social sciences” (1997, p. 8). It becomes absurd if there are two ghettos, those studying the EU and those studying European society. Perhaps there might just be a relationship between the political/legal/policy construction of the EU and its structural viability as a model of European society and economy? It is, to say the least, a question worth considering.

This sweep through sociology is a crude, caricatural exercise – that for sure leaves out or underplays many worthy efforts of colleagues to do a sociology of European society (again see our literature reviews where we try to do everyone justice). But our point is maybe that these efforts are so fragmented, and so hidden behind the correct dominant perception that sociology is *either* the quantitative reification of North American society *or* the social theoretical mystification of European modernity, that their efforts have been easy to ignore. Our goal here has to be to try and drag sociological concerns about Europe somewhere nearer to terrain that those sitting here might recognise as relevant and necessary to their own.

The social bases of European integration

Our strategy here is to put something understudied back on the EU studies agenda. The notion of studying the “social bases of European integration” is taken from a brilliant, unjustly neglected paper by Alan Milward, in an idiosyncratic collection of essays on the EU edited by the new left review intellectuals, Perry Anderson and Peter Gowan, *The Question of Europe* (1997).¹

Milward makes the very basic, but fundamental point, that European integration ultimately has been driven by the broad wishes and support of European middle classes – the same median populations that have determined national political outcomes in the post-war period, ensured the maintenance of welfare state and pastoral national institutions, and represent the core of European societies. The cliché of EU elites freely manipulating a far off population is neither a realistic nor viable model of how post-war European economy and society has worked. Any stable and enduring political system depends on a broad social basis undergirding it as a political structure. It should be sociology’s task to explore this social base: to show how politics is grounded in society (and history), not made up *sui generis* with every fresh election or opinion poll. And turning to institutionalism – as is the move frequently made at this point – itself only begs the question: what social structures undergird institutions? It is a point made, in a slightly different way, by Neil Fligstein in his forthcoming book that will stake out one comprehensive view of what an empirical sociology of the EU might look like. Fligstein notes that while only 13% of the European population identify primarily as Europeans – not a great result after 50+ years of institutional construction, more than 50% sometimes do. That is to say, while the majority’s support for the EU is situational and provisional –

1 To put this into perspective, Milward’s paper is cited only twice on Google scholar

thereby certainly fragile in the face of the solid 30% plus who are solidly nationalist in their orientation – there is in fact not a democratic deficit in Europe but a clear social grounding that provides some causal explanation for the success of this fifty year construction. EU studies typically studies the stuff that is built up on all this: the treaties, policies, laws and institutions that make up the visible business of European politics. institutions, policies, and laws. All interesting stuff, but it is all superstructural. The base itself remains a mystery.

The issue of course is complicated by the fact that this underlying base to European integration might not be something that is measured in easily available attitudinal terms or in terms of conventional political indicators: the kind of things political scientists or social psychologists typically look for as ‘measurements’ of political society. Fligstein starts with attitudes to the EU but his work explores, with all the available given data sources, the many ways in which the plurality of Europeans might be measurably found – as business elites, moving students, consumer publics etc. In a more critical vein, neo-Gramscian scholars in international political economy have hinted at the same point: that the European Union is the conspiracy of a newly emergent “transnational capitalist class” (van Apeldoorn 2002). Maybe – but this needs empirical documentation and verification as a hypothesis (see for instance Carroll and Fennema 2002). The work mentioned above signals the need to study the Europeanised/sing behavior of the Europeans underpinning the regional integration that they have constructed *for themselves*, and not just not their attitudes to something an elite has constructed for them.

Respectable research on public opinion in the EU is limited at how far it gets at these questions, although it points to a sociological and geographical agenda. Gabel's work (1998) for instance shows that proximity to borders is linked to the use of EU rights. But attitudes are not a good proxy for behaviour on Europe, especially when it is so obvious that opinion on the EU runs so far behind use of EU rights – the Eurosceptic British being a good case, as arguably the most voracious in their using of EU rights to buy property or relocate to other parts of the EU. The trick of modern political science at this point – the fiction of voting as 'revealed preferences' – only underlines how little scholars know or care about political socialisation. The most common quasi-sociological turn, meanwhile, has been to the question of studying European identity. Good work has been done (see Herrmann, Risse et al 2004; Checkel and Katzenstein 2008), most impressively when it cuts itself loose from the hall of European mirrors that pre-packaged Euro data represents, and begins to generate new research models and methods for getting at the identity question with constructed samples of their own (Duchesne and Frogner 2002, Medrano 2003, Bruter 2004). But identity is not behaviour either, and it often presupposes a "groupist" ontology that again mystifies the search for a truly micro-level base. Our preference would be to get 'beyond identity' altogether (see Favell 2005) and build upon the latest developments in cognitive and interactional studies of ethnicity (see Brubaker 2004).

Sociology – as opposed to social theory – is all about operationalisation. As these tentative moves towards a more sociological understanding of Europeanised political behaviour show, it is by no means easy to design and implement methods for studying the

actual and potential bases of European integration. A good rule of thumb would be that to really study European integration sociologically we need to study *real people*. Not only the elites who are working in and for our favourite institutions in Brussels, and not Europeans reified as ethnic or national groups and collective identities. Rather, studies need to home in on the very real individuals experiencing and living out the micro-level consequences of macro-level regional integration on an everyday, social level, and whose actions and embodiments of Europe as an everyday practice aggregate somehow into the familiar political, institutional and pan-European societal structures we know.

To some extent, these questions have been mapped out by historians and political economists. Hartmut Kaelble's *Auf der Weg der Europäische Gesellschaft* (1987) for example, ought to be EU studies 101 required reading for scholars thinking about the structural sources of European convergence and integration around a certain social and economic model. Göran Therborn – a social theorist – draws heavily on Kaelble in his insightful *European Modernity and Beyond* (1995), the only broad work in contemporary social theory that is able and willing to ask genuinely empirical questions about the origins of contemporary Europe in the making. From other disciplinary perspectives, the big political economy has been filled out in recent work by Mattli (1999) and Katzenstein (2006), and it would be good too if more attention were paid to regional studies scholars in Geography who naturally think in terms that transcend narrow political institutional terms or the methodological nationalism of national-state-society focused studies, and whose disciplinary concepts are so better attuned to thinking about flows, transactions, scales and mobilities (see Dunford 1998; Rodriguez-Pose 2002). In political science

itself, Bartolini (2005) is the latest ambitious sketch of a regional integration analysis in the Rokkan tradition to point towards mobile or regionalised populations that *must be there* if we are to have any adequate sociological understanding of how the EU has got this far. Again, he makes the point but goes no further. Another way of putting this would be to point out as Mattli and Fligstein do, that it is high time that we updated Haas and Deutsch. But how can it be done? How can we look at the macro-regional process of political integration through the microscope of everyday citizens' lives? Here a few research examples can be proposed as points of departure.

Networks

The instinct of political scientists when faced with the big political sociology question of Europe has typically been to turn to political actors, and look for mobilisation or political organisation across borders (Imig and Tarrow 2001). This is undoubtedly happening, but it does reinforce again the perception that Europe is a phenomenon of and for certain elites. Yet beyond politics the networks can be far richer and much wider in their impact. In a fascinating exploratory work, Ulrich Krotz (2002) for example considers the multiple and diverse “para-public” links – the associations, exchanges, town twinnings and projects – that have underpinned on an everyday level the decades long transformation of German-French relations from enemies into peaceful bedfellows at the core of the European construction. The idea that this kind of societal stability is the outcome of only diplomatic bargaining of high politics is, of course, an illusion born of the narrowness of political studies of the subject. Transnationalism has to run much deeper if it is to hold

sway over centuries of nationalist hostility. Historians such as Wolfram Kaiser are now beginning to explore the multiple ways in which cross-cutting political and social networks knitted together the visions of first Christian Democrat and later Socialist politicians in the making of Europe, with their roots far into business sectors and civil society.

Movement

A natural population to consider in the search for Europeans are those actively moving within Europe as a fruit of European free movement rights. This can mean, literally, the small but symbolically potent population of intra-EU migrants who must number among the most prototypical Europeans in the continent. In survey based and ethnographic work, Recchi, Favell and associates (Recchi and Favell 2008; Favell 2008) have explored the lives, careers and experiences of these 'Eurostars', often pointing to the hidden barriers they still face in flattened Europe, alongside their unsurprising affiliation to the European project. One key question is how such spatial mobility is linked to social mobility. Their findings suggest that while European mobility opportunities are more likely the province of upper-middle and upper class Europeans (which echoes Fligstein), there have been significant upward social mobility effects for migrants from the south of Europe, and for migrants who move to major metropolitan hubs, especially London. The effect of less than 2% of the current European population is not going to be structural, but their symbolism is clear. A bigger population of movers for sure are East-West migrants, a new migration system within Europe that *is* having profound structural effects on the

service economy (Favell 2006). These new Europeans offer a reminder of how the question of regional integration can be given a human face by considering these migrants as its vector. It also allows us to subvert the kind of easy conclusion that might be made from public opinion data: Eurosceptic Britain again turns out to be the *most* integrated member state in Europe if measured by the degree and extent of access enjoyed by new member state citizens to foreign labour markets. Britain and Ireland's example have on this point led the way into an otherwise political doubtful acceptance across most of Western Europe that the transitional barriers to free movement had to come down. Other forms of immigration, too, are a key indicator of the regional integration processes that appear to be sweeping Europe along towards a much more porous and mobile North American migration/labour market model. The point is, that once movement is seen as a crucial indicator of regional integration, it can be seen everywhere. Trains, trucks, planes are all more mobile within Europe on a scale unimaginable twenty to thirty years ago, and even borders to external European neighbours are down well in advance of any kind of official political treaty or law hitting the books. Cross-border commuting, shopping, retirement migration, tourism and studying within Europe (King and Ruiz Gelices 2003) are all better measurements of European integration than Eurobarometer claspometers on whether the EU is a good thing today. The behaviour is there and not difficult to see; every movement, every experience is an infrastructural element in a social architecture that makes the existence of European institutions up there somewhere in the clouds so much more comprehensible.

Consumption

Mobility, of course, need not be physical movement. The four freedoms indeed have created many more opportunities for other forms of financial, material and symbolic mobility in the lives and daily organisation of individuals and families now living on a different European scale. In groundbreaking urban research in several major cities, Patrick Le Galès and associates have developed a survey that seeks to map out the spatial and newly Europeanised organisation of middle to upper middle class families in terms of social networks, consumption, business, travel, education of children and so on. The challenge will be to find meaningful ways of comparing these micro-level dimensions of regional integration over time, in comparison with an older, more nation-centered Europe, and across space, in terms of the distinction and blurring between the Europeanised and the globalised. But again, shifting the notion of European integration into this micro-political terrain reminds us of how narrow so much political science debate on Europeanisation has been in its single minded concern with tracing laws, institutions and policy processes rather than its broader causes and effects (Börzel 2002; Vink and Graziano 2006). We agree in this respect with Olsen that the term Europeanization should be an “attention-getting device and a starting point for further exploration” (Olsen 2002) but have to disagree with the idea that the term Europeanization is the property of political scientists who study compliance with EU law or only effects on policy and politics, an extremely narrow definition and agenda.

Europeanisation, reopened to its sociological meanings, will be all about emergent class interests, as Fligstein suggests, certainly looser and more unpredictable aggregations that

classic class and occupational categories. It was also be about spatial formations and networks. No-one is suggesting that the European integration process is irreversible or that the social bases identified are cast in rock. The balance can change, earthquakes can happen; rights of mobility, movement across borders are a notably fragile achievement in a world still ruled by nationalised politics. But the stability of this construction over the fifty year long haul is striking. Even in the absence of an enthusiastic or highly mobilised population, and with the continual threat of political withdrawal, there is little to suggest any kind of roll back of European societal integration – and much to potentially suggest the opposite. Very little indeed may have yet been seen in terms of the consequences of everyday Europeanisation. Not that many people are moving, and only a minority have direct experience of the European citizenship rights of which the EU commission is so proud. But very few Europeans have been untouched in their material everyday lives by some aspect of European integration, and not many are actively imagining a different Europe. As is frequently said of the Erasmus generation, for whom Europe has become a banal, almost boring fact, it is too early to even see how deeply the European project has been anchored.

Conclusion: the question of social power – and the future of EU studies

We have argued that some kind of social basis to European integration is a necessary condition of any European integration at the political level. It is high time this became a priority topic on the EU theory agenda, and the object of more concerted research. The unresolved question we will leave hanging here is one about ‘domination’ or ‘social

power’. The notion of a base underlying the political superstructure clearly contains some social order/stability premise, a sociological corollary to the well noted claim that the EU is currently in a stable equilibrium – for example by Moravcsik, in his recent post-constitutional analysis of the state of the EU in the EUSA newsletter (2005). He may well be right, but again some kind of social structure is propping up this political-legal institutional settlement, if this is the case. It is however an open question in classic sociological terms, of whether this structure is consensual or conflict based. There are always distinct liberal and Marxist readings in the kind of comprehensive neo-Weberian sociology we are proposing here. Liberal leaning scholars may wish to accent the ways in which actual and incipient European integration reflects more or less precisely the behavioural interests of everyday Europeans in terms of how they organise their lives regionally, consume, travel, or map out their world on a European scale, etc. Marxist leaning scholars will want to accent the way these forms of behaviour reveal the social power or domination of particular classes or networks over others less well positioned to benefit from or think on a European scale, or perhaps identify the core dynamic as a struggle within elites for a definition of the national vs transnational in Europe. This question is ultimately a question of political outlook, and can be left hanging here, ‘to be discussed’. But let us first make sure EU studies does discuss it.

Either way, in shifting our explanations of European integration away from the circular, auto-referential concerns of ‘integration theory’, away from the all consuming concerns of the ‘policy process’ in Brussels, or the narrow conception of institutional Europeanisation, towards something deeper and more fundamental, we may do EU

studies more generally a service. Something quite important is forced on EU studies by a genuine sociological agenda. Addressing the vast and difficult question of accounting for the social bases of European integration – in social, spatial and historical terms – researchers in the ‘top down’ mode of political science, law, IR or diplomatic history might also find new resources for a better defence of why studying European regional integration is crucial to the concerns of their own mainstream discipline. In the end, none of us like to be engaged in work that can be politely parked by the mainstream in some quiet side-street.

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